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I. United States

1. ROK Strikes

Reuters ("SEOUL WARNS STRIKERS, BLASTS OPPOSITION," Seoul, 01/23/97) reported that ROK labor minister Jin Nyum was quoted by ministry officials as warning Thursday that the government would no longer tolerate illegal strikes. "The minister said the workers should stop illegal strikes while a solution is being sought by politicians," Son Khong-ho, a director-general at the ministry, told Reuters. "He said no more illegal activities will be tolerated." Jin did not specify what measures would be taken against strikers or when the government would act. Meanwhile, representatives of the ruling New Korea Party criticized opposition parties for dismissing President Kim Young-sam's offer to reopen parliamentary debate over the new labor law. The opposition rejected Kim's offer Wednesday, saying any debate in parliament could only be held on condition the law was first repealed. "It is really shameless behavior... for the opposition to demand the nullification of the law, while it could not provide an alternative and has not put forward its own draft," a statement from the New Korea Party said. The party rammed the law through parliament during a seven-minute pre-dawn session December 26 while opposition legislators were asleep.

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New Korea Party said. The party rammed the law through parliament during a seven-minute pre-dawn session December 26 while opposition legislators were asleep.

2. DPRK Defectors

Reuters ("HUNGER DROVE N. KOREANS ON TRIP TO SOUTH," Seoul, 01/23/97) reported that a spokesman for the ROK Agency for National Security Planning was quoted in ROK media as saying that the eight DPRK defectors who arrived in the ROK Wednesday were driven to the action by the DPRK's worsening famine. Members of the group of two families, who reportedly traveled ten months through the PRC and before crossing the Yellow Sea in freezing weather to reach the ROK, were quoted as saying they decided to flee after seeing seven people in a town of 90 families starve to death between January and March last year. The ministry spokesman gave few further details on the defectors, saying, "They are being investigated and we have nothing to make public yet."

United Press International ("S.KOREA OPPOSITION SAYS DEFECTORS 'PLANNED'," Seoul, 01/23/97) reported that ROK opposition lawmakers on Thursday accused the ROK government of timing the unveiling of the eight DPRK defectors to deflect attention from domestic problems. Chung Dong-young, spokesman for the opposition National Congress for New Politics (NCNP), said that the opposition believes that the government's National Security Agency is holding hundreds of DPRK nationals in the PRC and arranges their escape when needed to deflect public attention away from political issues. The spokesman cited reports that the two families found on a small island earlier in the week had been in the PRC since last March.

3. DPRK food Situation

The Associated Press ("GROUP: FAMINE LOOMS IN N. KOREA," Seoul, 01/23/97) reported that InterAction, a coalition of 150 humanitarian groups including US relief groups and other non-governmental organizations, on Thursday said in a statement that the US government must take urgent action to forestall a major famine in the DPRK next spring. The statement said that the DPRK's 23 million people are "in the throes of a life-threatening food shortage that could take on famine proportions in the months to come." "Predictions are that severe malnutrition will begin by May unless relief is sent," the coalition's statement said. "The NGOs that comprise InterAction believe the situation is urgent and critical, and call upon the US government to exert the global leadership to avert disaster." The United Nations has estimated the food shortfall this year in the DPRK could amount to 2.3 million tons -- an amount sufficient to feed 12 million people for a year. The Clinton administration contributed US\$8 million to UN agencies to provide food and medical supplies to the DPRK after massive flooding in 1995.

The US Information Agency ("ACTING A/S KARTMAN 1/23 REMARKS ON FOOD AID TO N. KOREA," USIA Report, 01/23/97) reported that US government officials met with representatives from several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) January 23 to discuss the ongoing food shortages in the DPRK. "We are glad to have had this opportunity to exchange views on the North Korean food situation," Acting Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Charles Kartman said at a January 23 news conference. "We also greatly appreciate the efforts the NGOs have made in alleviating human suffering in North Korea. As in the past, the US government continues to encourage and welcome the provision of private assistance for that purpose." Kartman said the US government has no immediate plans to provide food assistance to the DPRK, but "we are continuing to monitor the situation there closely." Speaking on behalf of the NGO community, Don Krumm of Refugees International urged the US Administration and congressional leaders to take "bold and decisive action" on the DPRK situation. "It takes four months to order and move food from the continental United States to North Korea," he said. "A decision to provide humanitarian food assistance to North Korea, if made today, would not deliver food to hungry North Koreans until

April, just at the time the North Koreans will run out of food." "Starving people cannot be counted on to remain docile forever," Krumm warned. "The family of 17 that worked its way out of North Korea via China recently could be a harbinger of much larger migrations to come, creating havoc for surrounding nations with a potential for much loss of life, social disruption and a large humanitarian assistance bill." [Ed. note: The text of Kartman's remarks is available at the USIA WWW site, the address for which is provided at the bottom of this report.]

II. Republic of Korea

1. DPRK Defectors

Eight people from the DPRK defected to the ROK yesterday, arriving yesterday at Incheon Harbor on the ROK's west coast aboard a vessel from a third nation. The Agency for National Security Planning (NSP) announced that the eight DPRK nationals revealed their intention to defect to the ROK after being rescued by maritime police. The defectors included Kim Yong-jin, aged 50, his wife, two sons, and Yoo Song-il, aged 46, his son and two daughters. Kim reportedly said that he is a relative of Kim Song-kap, a brother of Kim Il-sung's wife Kim Song-ae. Maritime police found the DPRK nationals at 1 p.m. yesterday drifting on a vessel from a third nation and moved them to a maritime police base on Kyokryolbi Islands where they re-confirmed their intent to defect to the ROK. All the defectors were then moved by helicopter from the islands to Incheon. The NSP said that they will hold a press conference as soon as the defectors' personal data and motives for defection are investigated. (Joong-ang Ilbo, "EIGHT NORTH KOREANS DEFECT TO THE SOUTH ABOARD A THIRD NATION VESSEL," Seoul, 01/23/97)

2. DPRK-Taiwan Nuclear Waste Deal

The DPRK plans to bury nuclear waste from Taiwanese power plants in abandoned mines in Pyongsang District of Hwanghehnamdo Province, according to the ROK Environmental Campaign Federation. The Security General for the Federation of the ROK said Wednesday that the Taiwanese government had a secret contract to export 200,000 drums of nuclear waste to the DPRK in two shipments and had promised last Sunday an additional US\$2.4 million to the facilities to bury the waste. The Federation said the Taiwanese government had promised to provide US\$227.6 million to the DPRK for the entire agreement. The Federation asked the Taiwanese government and DPRK authorities to scrap the plan as it is extremely rare to bury nuclear waste in abandoned mines as this pollutes underground water. (Chosun Ilbo, "NORTH TO BURY TAIWANESE NUCLEAR WASTE IN CLOSED MINE," Seoul, 01/23/97)

ROK Foreign Minister Yoo Chong-ha yesterday warned of "political and economic" measures against Taiwan if it fails to withdraw its plan to export radioactive waste to the DPRK. "We have talked over the issue with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), but found that it is hard to take a legal action against Taiwan for exporting low-rate nuclear waste. Instead, we are determined to blockade Taiwan's plan politically and economically," he told reporters. Seoul is determined to "decrease or withdraw favors granted to Taiwan," a ministry official said. Meanwhile, the foreign minister said that Seoul will refrain from offering "unilateral and humanitarian aid" to the DPRK. Also economic packages are not to be given to the DPRK to compensate the DPRK for joining in the "joint briefing" on the four-party peace talks. "Seoul can consider helping North Korea economically on the condition that North Korea fully cooperates with us in the four-party peace talks," Minister Yoo added. The foreign minister also stressed that inter-Korean ties should progress before the DPRK improves its relations with the US and Japan. "If North Korea managed to improve ties with the US and Japan, it will negatively affect inter-Korean ties. If they support South Korea from behind-the-scenes, it will help South and North Korea improve relations," Yoo said. (The Korea Times, "SEOUL CONSIDERING RETALIATION FOR TAIWAN N-WASTE SHIPMENT TO NK," Seoul,

01/23/97)

Asia Weekly of Hong Kong reported in its latest issue that Taiwan had long been negotiating with Russia, Marshal Archipelagos, and the PRC on a deal to store nuclear waste, and only contacted the DPRK for the first time last September. The journal also said that the ROK was aware of Taiwan's initial proposal to the DPRK and had sent agents to the Taiwan National Electric Power Corporation in protest. However, the ROK had underestimated the speed with which the agreement would unfold, while the DPRK firm involved rushed the deal to conclusion by utilizing up to 10 translators day and night for paperwork, the journal reported, quoting Chen Fangxien from the Taiwan National Electric Power Corporation's nuclear disposal office. (Chosun Ilbo, Yeo Si-dong, "HONG KONG JOURNAL SAYS; ROK KNEW ABOUT THE TAIWAN-DPRK NUCLEAR WASTE DISPOSAL DEAL," Hong Kong, 01/23/97)

3. ROK Intelligence Agency Reform

The reform of ROK's Agency for National Security Planning (NSP) is regressing after a initial progress in the beginning of President Kim Young-sam's term. Reform initiatives including prohibition of political inspection, organizational downsizing, and reinforcement of overseas intelligence capabilities are stalling or backtracking, according to NSP officials, and certain bureaus that had been reduced in size or eliminated altogether are now returning to strength. An example is the political bureau, which had been disbanded in 1993 but reappeared last year. The political bureau was known for its infamous political inspection and clandestine operations during ROK's authoritarian regimes. The NSP is still known to be participating in ministerial meetings and influencing the outcome of government policies. The original reform plan to reduce the domestic force by up to 20 percent while increasing the budget for overseas intelligence activities has not being observed. A NSP official said, "NSP's overseas activities budget does not even amount to ten percent of the total budget ... because the final consumer of intelligence, the president, is more interested in domestic politics than situations abroad." (Hankyoreh Shinmun, "ROK'S AGENCY FOR NATIONAL SECURITY PLANNING (NSP) HALTS ITS REFORM," Seoul, 01/23/97)

4. ROK Strikes

The political gridlock involving the laws railroaded through parliament in December is likely to continue for the time being, despite concessions made by Chong Wa Dae, as the opposition is still insisting upon its original demand for a total repeal of the controversial laws. The opposition is maintaining that the House should proclaim the new laws "null and void." In contrast, the ruling New Korea Party (NKP) demands that the opposition immediately join in revising the laws at the National Assembly under the alleged agreement that emerged from the Chong Wa Dae talks Tuesday. The NKP yesterday made it clear that an outright nullification of the new laws is out of the question. At the same time, the NKP's floor leader attempted to reopen dialogue with the opposition for revision of the labor laws. However, the opposition camp was hesitant to accept the dialogue offer yesterday, saying any rapprochement over the issue would be possible only after the ruling camp agrees to accept the opposition's original demand. The opposition parties, on the other hand, were reconfirming their united front yesterday by ironing out their initial differences over the result of the Chong Wa Dae summit. Just after the summit meeting, the National Congress for New Politics (NCNP) offered a positive response to the talks, but instantly shifted its position to a hard-line stance to fall in line with the United Liberal Democrats (ULD). The opposition is seemingly determined to take advantage of the labor issue to promote political interests. The issue may provide them the momentum to gain the upper hand in connection with the upcoming presidential election, political observers said. Given such a position of the opposition, the stalemate over the labor issue is likely to be prolonged for a certain period. (The Korea Times, "POLITICAL GRIDLOCK LIKELY TO CONTINUE," Seoul, 01/23/97)

The NAPSNet Daily Report aims to serve as a forum for dialogue and exchange among peace and security specialists. Conventions for readers and a list of acronyms and abbreviations are available to all recipients. We invite you to reply to today's report, and we welcome commentary or papers for distribution to the network.

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